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ABSTRACT

This is a pilot study on the readjustment process of Brazilians returned from graduate study in the U.S. Subjects were 31 former exchange scholars who were interviewed by the senior author after they returned to Brazil. The family, professional and social problems experienced by those scholars as they tried to readjust to life in their home country was investigated. Interviews were coded independently twice, over a 16-month interval. High reliability levels were obtained, which inspires confidence in the consistent rating of the taped interviews. Overall results indicated that returnees had little difficulty adjusting to life with their families except for the fact they experienced some value conflict with them, as well as some lack of privacy. Most of their problems were related to adjusting to their professional life. In that category they reported that they found some difficulty adjusting to the system as a whole, and to their role as college professors. Lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of facilities and materials, excessive red tape, lack of opportunity and time to do research was fairly common for most and they felt these were moderately serious problems. In most cases returnees felt they were coping quite adequately. (Author)

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READJUSTMENT PROBLEMS OF BRAZILIAN RETURNEES FROM GRADUATE STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES

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What are the specific problems of reverse-culture shock experienced by Brazilian returnees from graduate study in the United States? We can assume that foreign students, living for a certain period of time in a different culture, go through a process of adjustment and value changes. They temporarily become part of a new social system, with unfamiliar relationships, roles, and expectations. These changes produce new attitudes, behaviors, and a corresponding change in feelings. Cross-cultural adjustment involves the development of some new role behaviors both as a foreign student abroad, and later, after returning home again. Culture shock, in the initial stages of adjustment, is a temporary form of personality disorientation due to change of cultures, which is accompanied by anxiety, confusion and apathy, a subjective feeling of loss, and a sense of isolation and loneliness (Lundstedt, 1963).

There have been some attempts to explain the intercultural adjustment process (Conway, 1969; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963;

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Oberg, 1958; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976). Many of those authors describe the adjustment of the sojourner along a temporal dimension represented by a W-curve function having six stages: (1) feelings of euphoria and optimism in the new country, (2) a decline in adjustment in the host culture followed by (3) a recovery stage of increasing adjustment, (4) initial feelings of euphoria and satisfaction after returning to the home country followed by (5) another decline in adjustment in the home culture and, finally, (6) if they are able to make the final adjustment there is a stage of recovery and increased adjustment. The above pattern defines the adjustment process of a large number of sojourners. The intensity varies. Some may experience a more severe crisis than others, and some may never readjust again (Brein and David, 1971).

There seems to be very few studies dealing with the second part of the W-curve, the re-entry crisis. However, Brislin and Pedersen (1976, p. 16) comment that readjustment may be more difficult than the original adjustment.

The readjustment back home is likely to be even more difficult than going abroad in the first place, all the more since this adjustment is frequently unexpected. Not only has the trainee changed, but the back home culture has likewise changed, making it doubly difficult to readjust. People's expectations for returning may have been distorted in an unrealistically favorable direction by their very absence. When they find themselves unable to pick up where they left off or even to start from scratch at some new endeavor, they are likely to experience a re-entry crisis.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) did an interview and Questionnaire study of 5300 American Fulbright and Smith-Mundt grantees while abroad and then back in the U.S. They conclude that, as a consequence of the experience abroad, the sojourner acquires expectation patterns compatible to the new system and identifies with the new group. When they return home they find themselves with different values, expectations and behaviors. As time goes by they undergo a re-acculturation process similar to the one experienced while abroad. They also found that younger student grantees experience a more intense and traumatic re-entry crisis than older grantees (professors and lecturers).

Pearson (1964) and Stolley (1965) studied the returning crises of Peace Corps Volunteers. They found difficulty in readjusting to the affluent lifestyle in the U.S., resulting in role conflict, feelings of aimlessness or disillusionment, and the questioning of familiar values which now seemed in conflict with newly acquired behaviors and values. An interview of fourteen returnees from underdeveloped countries who had studied in Germany (Froehlich & Schade, 1966) describes a complex relationship between the returnee and his/her home culture and also some intense role conflicts in his/her position. Orr (1971) reviewed some research on foreign students and reports returnees felt they changed as a result of their experience abroad, and became more flexible, insightful and sensitive. Those who had difficulty readjusting were typically younger, alienated from their home culture, from countries

where there was distrust of the U.S., from more rigid cultures and/or those who had little influence in their home countries. Bochner (1973) reports that individuals who are most successful at adjusting to the host culture frequently have the most difficulty readjusting to their old culture. Brislin and Van Buren (1973) suggest that maybe the person who adjusts easily is one who is open to new ideas, to multi-national experiences and who is stimulated by the challenge he/she meets everyday in a new country. On the other hand he/she may have more problems readjusting because his/her new ideas conflict with tradition and he/she may find little stimulation in the country he/she is so familiar with.

The present pilot study is designed with the following purposes: (1) To identify re-adjustment problems likely to arise when Brazilian LASPAU (Latin American Scholarship Program of American University) scholars who have returned from a period of graduate study in the U.S. and seek to readjust to the Brazilian life style, (2) To assess the intensity of the adjustment problems as perceived by participants, and (3) To measure coping skills used to deal with the problems experienced according to the returnees' own perception of coping adequacy.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample consisted of 31 Brazilian LASPAU returnees from graduate study in the U.S. Although an attempt was made to interview all returnees, we were only able to locate 78% of the total number of LASPAU scholars returned to Brazil at the time of the interviews. Respondents ranged in age from 16 to 24 years old averaging 20 years old in 1974. There were 22 men and 9 women respondents. Thirteen of them were single and 18 were married. Living arrangements included 2 who lived alone, 3 who lived with friends, 11 who lived with their spouses, 11 (both married and single) who lived with their parents, and 4 who were married and had lived with their parents from 3 to 6 months after returning and now lived just with the spouse. The respondents had lived in the U.S. for a period of time ranging from 13 to 46 months ($\bar{X}$ 25.19, s.d. 6.42). While in the U.S. 2 scholars completed the Bachelors degree and did some graduate study, while 29 completed the Master's degree. At the time of the interview all but one of the subjects were working as college professors.

Procedure

An interview guide was developed to standardize an interview for collecting data. The guided interview format was based on a survey of the main areas of problems of reverse cultural shock

and also on an informal survey done with seven returnees of graduate study in the U.S.

Description of incidents and problems experienced after returning to Brazil and the coping skills used to deal with the incidents were obtained through personal taped interviews done with each subject. The interview covered fourteen potential crisis areas: (1) family expectations conflicting with student expectations; (2) value conflicts between the student and the family; (3) the availability of privacy after returning to Brazil; (4) the degree of supervision and/or independence in Brazil and in the U.S. (5) readjustment to the organizational system at the sponsoring university; (6) adjustment to their new role at the sponsoring university; (7) intellectual stimulation at their work setting; (8) the availability of facilities and material; (9) the problems of administrative red tape; (10) problems of professional jealousy; (11) discrepancy between goals of the study program and their responsibilities at the sponsoring university; (12) opportunity to do research; (13) time to do research; (14) discrepancy between expectations and reality in their perceptions of Brazil. Part of each interview was open ended, allowing the subject freedom to bring in any other relevant topic. In each problem area the interviewer attempted to assess first the presence or absence of critical incidents, second, the degree to which incidents were perceived as problems, and third their perception of how adequate their coping behavior was.

Each interview was recorded on audio cassettes and coded to provide a score between 1 and 10, measuring response intensity on a broad range of incidents and skills in the fourteen categories. A coding sheet was designed based on the fourteen areas of potential crisis previously mentioned.

Analysis

The resulting data were analyzed to determine: (1) the frequency and level of intensity for each of the 14 potential crisis categories to determine the most important problem areas; (2) whether females experience more intense re-adjustment problems than males; (3) whether there was a re-adjustment configuration where some problems were more likely to occur together than others; and (4) whether there was reliability between two independent scorings of the taped interviews.

The audio tapes were coded by the first author, who also conducted the guided interviews herself. The tapes were all independently coded a second time 16 months later to obtain a measure of coder reliability. The levels of reliability are reported on Table 1 using a Pearson Correlation formula. The correlations were high enough to inspire confidence in the consistent rating of taped responses. Constraints of time and budget required that the interviewer also code the data even though there would be substantial advantages to having trained coders not otherwise associated with the project.

RESULTS

Overall results indicate that the returnees had little difficulty readjusting to life with their families in Brazil and in most cases didn't see that as much of a problem. The only exceptions were value conflict ($\bar{X}=4.7$ s.d.=3.2) and availability of privacy ($\bar{X}=5.7$ s.d.=3.5) where they had moderate difficulty. Neither of them were considered to be serious and returnees felt they coped with it rather well.

Adjusting to professional life in their sponsoring universities was the most difficult re-entry problem for most returnees, as seen on Table 2. They had a high level of expectations about the system and about their role which were not met. But although they saw those, in most cases, as serious problems, they felt they were able to cope quite adequately. The mean "readjustment to the system" score suggests that returnees found it hard to adjust to the way things were or the way of doing things at the sponsoring university as it differed from the system in the U.S. This was seen as a moderately serious problem, but by using strategies such as suggesting and trying to implement changes, building a support system, trying to do the job well, etc. they perceived themselves to be coping adequately. As many of the returnees had never taught in the college level before many of them had some difficulty adjusting to their role as professors. This was seen as a moderately important problem with which they felt

they had coped adequately. Lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of facilities and materials, excessive red tape, lack of opportunity and time to do research in their sponsoring universities were fairly common problems for most of the returnees and most of them felt these were moderately serious problems, but in most cases they felt they were coping adequately with them. Some returnees also felt their colleagues at the sponsoring universities were jealous of them. This was a moderately frequent phenomena, and although this was not a serious problem for most returnees it was very serious for others. Asked whether there was any discrepancy between the goals of their study program in the United States and their response at the universities where they were working returnees reported a moderate to small degree of discrepancy, overall, although it was a very serious problem for some. Both in the case of jealousy from colleagues and goal discrepancy, returnees felt they were able to cope rather adequately. The most common coping behaviors used to deal with problems encountered at work included direct discussion, patience and tolerance, disregard of norms and expectations by doing their own thing, interviewing and searching for alternatives, systems intervention, compromising, material development and looking for other part time jobs.

Although there were only nine women in the sample, the data on topics, problems and coping behaviors were cross

tabulated for men and women separately to determine whether sex role made a significant difference in the kinds of problems, intensity of problems, and coping strategies of returnees. Men were more adequate in coping with family expectations ($\chi^2=14.822$, $p=.0217$) and in coping with supervision ($\chi^2=11.586$, $p=.0207$). Women experienced more administrative red tape ($\chi^2=16.884$, $p=.0313$), and find their value conflicts with their family to be much more of a problem than men do ($\chi^2=20.403$, $p=.0048$).

The distribution of scores for each of the problems discussed were intercorrelated with one another to look for patterns of problems that may or may not be associated with one another in the returnee's responses. It was presumed that some problems would go together more frequently than others. Correlations obtained are listed on Table 3. The low levels of correlations suggest that these problems might be discrete from one another with a minimum of overlapping. The exceptions relate professional jealousy with hard adjustment to role; professional jealousy with lack of intellectual stimulation; lack of research opportunity with lack of intellectual stimulation; lack of research opportunity with goal discrepancy; and lack of research opportunity with lack of research time. It is also important to point out the reverse relationship obtained between no value conflict with family and no privacy, and between lack of research opportunity and little administrative red tape. This is due to the fact that scales in those categories ran in

opposite direction to each other. Therefore value conflict was found to be negatively related to much privacy. In the same manner little research opportunity was negatively related to little red tape and thus probably positively related to much red tape. A more detailed analysis with a larger sample might seek to confirm the inter-relationship of those variables with one another.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the categories related to family life indicated less conflict and problems than the professional problems. The results obtained through the cross tabulation between males and females raise some interesting questions. Three of the four variables in which differences between sexes were significant were related to family life. In all of those cases women seem to find it harder to cope with family expectations, find their value conflicts to be more of a problem and are less adequate in coping with family supervision. Women also experience more value conflict with their family ($p=.0960$) and more lack of privacy ($p=.0867$). Some of the conflicting values and problem areas are very much related to each other.

Returnees experience value conflict regarding social and interpersonal relationships and regarding pre-marital sex. They complain they don't have the privacy to maintain intimate relationship in their house and to lead their own life style. The evidence provided in the cross-tabulation suggests that women experience more family conflict than men. Perhaps women change their values and feeling regarding interpersonal relationships and sexuality while in the United States, becoming more liberal, and experience problems readjusting to their families, more conservative values and life style when they return. Men wouldn't feel much of that because their education is already more liberal in Brazil. This inference is further

confirmed when the authors assessed which of the values and norms existing in the home culture the returnees were dissatisfied with. A great majority of them mentioned double standards of morality.

In the topics related to professional life a great majority of the returnees mentioned that they found it difficult to adjust to their work and its various limitations at the sponsoring universities. 67.7 percent said they had much or some difficulty adjusting to the system; 51.6 percent had much or some difficulty adjusting to their role as professors; 67.7 percent complained there was none to little intellectual stimulation; 81.1 percent felt there was much to some lack of facilities and materials; 83.9 percent complained about administrative red tape; 54.8 percent felt that colleagues were jealous of them; 80.6 percent complained there was little to just some opportunity to do research and 74.2 percent felt they had little time to do research. Most of the returnees felt professional relationships were moderate to serious problems for them. All of these problems have created much frustration among the returnees, and as the evidence suggests few of them seem to be completely satisfied with their jobs. Such results are to be expected. The returnees are very bright and capable students selected for scholarship in an American University after very careful screening by LASPAU. In the U.S. they experience a great amount of intellectual stimulation at a setting where many facilities are available, which probably

also increases their expectations about ideal work settings. It is only natural that they find it hard to readjust to the Brazilian Universities, which are academically, economically and socially, very different from the American ones. Most LASPAU scholars are selected on the basis of their leadership potential on the hope that upon returning to Brazil they would implement positive changes in their sponsoring schools. LASPAU and these authors would be disappointed if the returnees had no professional adjustment problems and simply accepted the status quo and adapted to the conditions at their schools. Therefore, the presence of professional adjusting problems should not be considered as a negative evaluation of the LASPAU program.

CONCLUSION

This is primarily a pilot study on the adjustment process of Brazilian returnees of graduate study in the U.S. In spite of the small sample it was possible to see that a great majority of returned scholars experience difficulties adjusting to their work settings, and have moderate difficulty adjusting to some aspects of their family and social life. However, the authors think that further research with a larger sample must be conducted to confirm or disconfirm the variables assessed.

Table 1: Correlations between scores from first and second independent coding of interview tapes as a measure of coding reliability

	Family vs student expectations	Value conflict with family	Availability of privacy	Family supervision in Brazil vs in the U.S.	Discrepancy between expectations and reality in Brazil	Readjustment to the system	Adjustment to the role	Intellectual stimulation	Availability of facilities and materials	Administrative red tape	Jealousy from colleagues	Discrepancy between goals of study program and university	Opportunity to do research	Time to do research
Level of Problem Presence	.84	.83	.82	.74	..*	.91	.69	.79	.74	.86	.88	.77	.89	.91
Stress Level Intensity	.87	.81	.89	.91	.89	.90	.87	.85	.75	.80	.91	.81	.88	.81
Self-perceived Coping Adequacy	.87	.84	.83	.81	.80	.63	.78	.66	.62	.70	.70	.67	.54	.71

* data incomplete

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Obtained in Stress-related Adjustment Categories of Family and Professional Life

		Readjustment to the organizational system	Readjustment to their new role back home	Intellectual stimulation back home	Availability of facilities and materials back home	Administrative red tape back home	Jealousy from colleagues back home	Discrepancy between goals of study program and work	Opportunity to do research back home	Time to do research back home	Family expectations vs student expectations	Value conflict with the family	Availability of privacy	Family supervision in Brazil vs. in the U.S.	Discrepancy between expectations and reality in returning to Brazil
Level of problem presence	$\bar{X}$	4.6	5.2	3.8	3.1	7.5	5.8	6.3	3.1	3.2	--	4.8	5.7	--	5.3
	s.d.	2.6	3.0	3.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	3.2	2.6	2.3	--	3.2	3.5	--	2.8
*Stress level intensity	$\bar{X}$	4.5	4.5	5.3	3.4	4.5	6.2	6.4	4.8	4.9	7.6	7.3	6.0	8.3	6.9
	s.d.	3.3	3.5	3.9	3.0	3.3	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.3	4.1	3.2	3.1
**Self-perceived coping adequacy	$\bar{X}$	2.5	2.4	2.4	1.4	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.7	1.3
	s.d.	1.9	2.2	2.5	.8	1.8	2.3	2.4	1.5	1.6	2.2	1.6	2.7	2.1	1.3

*1 = is a problem: 10 = is not a problem

**1 = adequately: 10 = inadequately

-- data incomplete

Table 3: Intercorrelation of topics discussed in research on a 10-point scale distribution measuring their presence or absence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. No Value Conflict with Family	1.	-0.37**	-0.19	0.15	0.06	0.04	-0.18	0.03	-0.02	0.17	0.09
2. No Privacy		1.	-0.33	-0.42	-0.12	0.22	-0.31	-0.24	-0.05	-0.07	-0.27
3. Hard Adjustment of New Role			1.	0.03	-0.33	-0.04	0.41*	0.28	0.11	-0.11	-0.06
4. No Intellectual Stimulation				1.	0.27	-0.02	0.37*	0.29	0.55*	0.24	-0.08
5. No Facilities and Materials					1.	-0.24	0.02	-0.22	0.17	-0.20	0.13
6. Little Administrative Red Tape						1.	0.04	-0.04	-0.32**	0.10	0.08
7. Much Professional Jealousy							1.	0.25	0.04	-0.19	0.06
8. Much Goal Discrepancy								1.	0.42*	0.19	0.25
9. Little Research Opportunity									1.	0.46*	0.05
10. Little Research Time										1.	-0.07
11. Little Discrepancy in Expectations and Reality in Brazil											1.

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* - significant at .05
one tailed - d.f.=29

** - scales on reverse order of intensity.

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